

Documents on Diplomacy: The Source

The Plight of Refugees

Ambassador Stovall in Switzerland to the Secretary of State, July 31, 1917

At the request of and expense of Polish General Committee of Vevey, I transmit following telegram addressed to Secretary of State:

Referring previous memorandum, take liberty inform you situation Poland becomes daily worse. Closed factories cause all population industrial centers out of work. In the country district situation equally disastrous; no workmen, no animals for transport, no agricultural implements or seed, quarter of land uncultivated. All products of soil monopolized and requisitioned by occupying powers, except small part, insufficient for Polish population, hence extreme penury of articles of food. Famine attacking millions adults and more children. Present generation threatened with destruction unless prompt aid is given. In this terrible crisis our supreme hope is in benevolence of the United States of America. In the name of General Committee, I take liberty to beg you to be our benevolent interpreter to Government of great Republic that she may give Poland same protection as Belgium by sending food in most practical way. To provide food for Poland is duty of occupying powers, but if they do not, that is no reason why millions of innocent Polish victims should perish from famine. Our Committee previously negotiated through Mr. Gerard, United States Ambassador at Berlin, on the subject, but negotiations had

no result, German Government having refused to allow Polish population to employ all products of country. Political situation being now changed, take liberty resume question of providing food for Poland which is vital for her future.

If American Government gives favorable decision, hope Allies will do utmost to save martyred Polish population from certain extermination. . .Relief is given to people all religions. Warsaw feeds more than 300,000 people by public kitchens but provisions now exhausted and no [more in sight.] President Wilson with approval of whole civilized world [stated] important to save present [population] threatened with extermination by famine. Millions of lives to be saved. The United States which since opening of hostilities have given many proofs of generosity will, we hope, fulfill humanitarian duty for Poland as for Belgium, strengthening ties which united Poland to great Republic since war of independence [and winning] profound gratitude of whole nation which will owe its existence to the great and noble American nation. General Polish Committee, President of the Executive Commission, Osuchowski.

STOVALL

1330.

Source

United States Department of State, Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, 1918, Supplement 2, The World War, p. 504